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Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament

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Thursday, April 19, 2018

Co-Chairs

Mr. Gagan Sikand

The Honourable Lucie Moncion

Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament

Thursday, April 19, 2018

● (1210)

[*English*]

The Joint Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Adam Thompson): Honourable senators and honourable members of the House of Commons, I see a quorum. As the Senate joint clerk of your committee, it is my duty to preside over the election of the Senate joint chair, and I am now prepared to receive nominations to that effect.

Are there any nominations?

Senator Duffy.

Hon. Michael Duffy (Senator, Prince Edward Island (Cavendish), ISG): Colleagues, I'd like to put in a nomination for Senator Lucie Moncion from North Bay.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Adam Thompson): Are there any other nominations? I'm seeing none, and I will put the question.

[*Translation*]

The Honourable Senator Michael Duffy moved that the Honourable Senator Lucie Moncion be chair of this committee.

[*English*]

Is it your pleasure, honourable members, to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Adam Thompson): I declare the motion carried and invite Senator Moncion to take the chair.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Paul Cardegna): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

I must inform the members of the committee that the Joint Clerk of the Committee can receive motions only for the election of the chair.

[*English*]

The co-clerk cannot receive other types of motions, nor entertain points of order, nor participate in debate. We can now proceed to the election of the joint chair of the House of Commons.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the joint chair must be a member of the government party.

I am now ready to receive motions for the position of joint chair of the House of Commons.

Sir.

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): I would like to nominate Gagan Sikand, please.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Paul Cardegna): Mr. Levitt has nominated Mr. Sikand.

Are there any other nominations?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Paul Cardegna): I declare Mr. Sikand duly elected joint chair of the House of Commons, and I would invite him to take his seat.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Gagan Sikand): I'm going to proceed.

If the committee is in agreement, I invite the joint clerk to proceed with the elections of the vice-chairs.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Paul Cardegna): Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair of the committee must be a member of the official opposition from the House of Commons.

I'm now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): I'd like to nominate Dave Van Kesteren.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Paul Cardegna): Mr. Lauzon has nominated Mr. Van Kesteren. Are there any other nominations?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Paul Cardegna): I declare Mr. Van Kesteren duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition in the House of Commons.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): I would like to nominate Ms. Quach.

[*English*]

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Paul Cardegna): Mr. Ouellette has nominated Madam Quach to the position of second vice-chair.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Paul Cardegna): I declare Madam Quach duly elected.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Senator Mercer, you wanted to speak to us.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer (Senator, Nova Scotia (Northend Halifax), L): Yes. I want to welcome everybody to the committee. We'll see you next year when we have the next meeting.

I did want to put a motion before the committee to invite the Parliamentary Budget Officer to appear before the committee to review the expense with respect to government spending that relates to the Library of Parliament.

● (1215)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Gagan Sikand): Thank you for that.

Is there any debate on the motion?

Hon. Michael Duffy: I have a question for Senator Mercer.

How does this fit with the motion that was in the Senate yesterday related to the budget of the Library of Parliament? Would you elaborate a bit on what you expect the PBO to do?

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: Historically, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reported to Parliament via this committee. That has changed, and he no longer does that. We have not had the Parliamentary Budget Officer before this committee in about five years, and it's about time that we did. In my discussions with him, he said he would pleased to come and enlighten us about government spending on this. As we will be going through so many changes over the next few years, it would be interesting to find out how the Library of Parliament fits into these changes on an ongoing basis. Plus, I'm sure he will have other things to say about government expenditures that might be of interest to all members.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Is there other discussion on the matter?

Are we in agreement with the proposition?

Yes? Thank you.

[*Joint chairs confer with joint clerks*]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): We will be going through the routine motions. Would anyone like to speak on these motions?

Mr. Michael Levitt: Yes, I would like to move that we review the routine motions now.

The first is on analysts services. It states:

> That the Committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the Joint Chairs, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

Next is time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. Do we need to...?

A voice: We should vote on it.

Mr. Michael Levitt: You have to vote on it. Yes.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): It won't hurt if we do, and it won't hurt if we don't.

Mr. Michael Levitt: Do you want to just go through them all, and then we can do it at the end?

Let's do that.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Please.

Mr. Michael Levitt: On time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses, it states:

> That witnesses appearing before the Committee be given ten (10) minutes to make their opening statement and that during the questioning of witnesses the time allocated to each questioner be five (5) minutes.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): All right. Just a moment, please.

We have to have a motion for every motion.

Mr. Michael Levitt: A vote?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Yes, we need a vote on every motion.

We'll go back to the analysts services. Is there any debate on that motion? If not, are there questions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): The next motion is on time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses.

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): The next one is on the subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

● (1220)

Mr. Michael Levitt: Madam Chair, given the current status in the Senate, I'm wondering if we can defer this motion.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Do we agree?

A voice: Agreed.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): All right. Thank you. We will defer it.

Mr. Michael Levitt: The next motion is on meeting without a quorum. It states:

> That the quorum be fixed at six (6) members, provided that each House is represented, and that a (1) member from a non-government party or recognized parliamentary group and that a (1) member from the government are present whenever a vote, resolution or other decision is taken; and that the Joint Chairs be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and have that evidence published when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three (3) members are present, including a member from a non-government party or recognized parliamentary group and a member from the government, and provided that each House is represented.

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): The next one is on documents distribution.

Mr. Michael Levitt: The motion states:

> That the Joint Clerks of the Committee be authorized to distribute to the members of the Committee only documents that are available in both official languages.

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Next is a motion to publish the committee's proceedings.

Mr. Michael Levitt: It states:

> That the Committee publish its proceedings and that *in camera* proceedings not be published

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): The next one is on travel.

Mr. Michael Levitt: The motion states:

> That, at the discretion of the Joint Chairs, the Committee may reimburse reasonable travelling and living expenses including child care and/or personal attendant care for one (1) witness from any one organization and that payment will take place upon application, but that the Joint Chairs be authorized to approve expenses for a second witness should there be exceptional circumstances.

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): The next motion is on working meals.

Mr. Michael Levitt: It states:

> That the Joint Clerks of the Committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the Committee and its Subcommittees.

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Next is access to in camera meetings.

Mr. Michael Levitt: The motion states:

> That each member of the Committee be allowed to have a staff member present at in camera meeting, in addition each party or recognized parliamentary group be permitted to have one (1) staff member from the Whip's office present.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Is there debate?

Yes, sir.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): I do have a question regarding "recognized parliamentary group". What falls into that? Do you have an example?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): I know what falls out of it, and that's the ISG, the Independent Senators Group.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Is it not included in here?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): It's not a recognized group.

I might be mistaken here. My colleagues might correct me.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Adam Thompson): Senators and members, I'll just clarify this. With the formation of the Independent Senators Group in the Senate, which does not function as a party, the term "recognized parliamentary group" was added to our rules. It refers, in the Senate context specifically, to the Independent Senators Group.

Mr. Colin Carrie: If they're independent senators, how can they be part of a group? How does that work?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): We are a group of independent senators. We are not whipped. The group meets for information purposes.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Okay, you're independent, but you are a group.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Yes.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Okay, thanks for clarifying that.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Is there any other debate or questions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): The next is notice of motion.

Mr. Michael Levitt: The next motion reads:

> That 48 hours' notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration and that the notice of motion be filed with the Joint Clerks of the Committee and distributed to members in both official languages.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Is there debate or questions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): The last one is quorum of subcommittee.

Mr. Michael Levitt: Madam Chair, given the current status in the Senate, I ask that we defer this motion.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Is there debate? We all agree on that.

● (1225)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Gagan Sikand): Moving forward to whether we're going to adopt the draft report, at this point, I'd like to open the floor to any debate, and if there's no debate, to adopt the draft report.

(Motion agreed to)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Yes, Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): I have a motion. Are we done with the routine procedures at this point? Are you ready to entertain a motion?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): We were going to see if there were other items we wanted to discuss.

Are there any items we'd like to discuss? You have a motion and a question? Can we start with the question, if you don't mind?

Ms. Quach.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Thank you.

When can we propose topics for the committee to study? Do we do that now, or do I have to do it by motion?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): That's a good question.

You can do it now or move a motion for future studies.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

I will give the floor to Mr. Van Kesteren, and I will propose a topic for consideration afterwards.

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Okay, Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Back in 2014, the committee passed a motion calling on the Library of Parliament to provide access on its public website to the Order Paper answers that had been made orders for return. As far as I can tell, they are currently on the intraparl site, but not available on the library's public website. We would simply like the Library of Parliament to adhere to the motion that was passed in 2014. It was presented by Liberal MP Scott Simms at the time. They already have the documents scanned and on the internal site. We believe the public should have access to them, as was mentioned in the motion that was passed back in 2014.

The motion is amended, because it was the 39th Parliament, and this is for the 40th. I move:

> That, whereas the Library of Parliament already scans Sessional Papers which are tabled in response to Order Paper Questions in the House of Commons, and makes the scanned copies available on the Parliamentary Intranet, that the Library of Parliament provide unfettered access for all Canadians to these same documents on the public internet site, and that such access be provided, from the beginning of the 40th Parliament and future scanned Sessional Papers, as soon as practicable.

That is my amended motion. I repeat that this motion is the same except the amendment is that this is the 40th Parliament.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Just for my personal education, not wanting to make a faux pas here, let me ask whether this motion would be presented to everyone or just brought forward here.

Is it something we could defer just by receiving the...?

● (1230)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: We could, except that this motion was already passed. What I'm asking that we do in lieu of that is accept the motion that was already passed.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Are there any questions or any discussion on this?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ouellette, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: I find it pretty surprising that the Library of Parliament hasn't conformed to the request of this committee. I find it disheartening, in fact, that they have not done so and are not offering open and transparent access to information to all Canadians. I would support this motion.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Okay. Are there any other comments or questions on this motion?

Senator Duffy.

Hon. Michael Duffy: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to ask Mr. Van Kesteren, if he could elaborate a little more on the history of this and what seems to be the problem for something, as Mr. Ouellette says, that is pretty basic to the functioning of our democracy.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: We are just aware that this motion, which was passed, has not been implemented. To our knowledge, and I think it's public knowledge as well, these records are still not being transferred.

We are asking that we just allow this motion to follow in this....

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Mr. Gerretsen, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): I'm curious as to whether the motion is redundant. If the direction has already been given, wouldn't it be incumbent upon the Library of Parliament to follow that direction? If not, is there a reason somebody can offer that it hasn't been followed to date? Is anybody able to provide that information? It seems odd.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): It does, I'll acknowledge that. I can't answer your question, but we will keep it in mind.

Senator Mercer.

Hon. Terry M. Mercer: It would seem to me a very good question, but a question better directed to the librarian. Perhaps, as you develop the agenda for future meetings, the librarian should be one of the first people we hear from. Obviously, one of the first questions will note that this committee passed this motion on said date and will ask why it has not been implemented. That's a good question to put to the librarian, and this is the place to do it.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): All right. Thank you, Senator.

How do we address this? I come from the Senate, and we talk to senators.

Member of Parliament Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Of course, we'd need to hear from the librarian, but I'm not sure of the exact date you mentioned that the motion was passed. It speaks to the 39th Parliament, and if it were late in the session, that might perhaps be a reason.

I would respectfully suggest, if the intent is to let the sun shine in, that we might fall into a similar situation by just referencing the motion for the current session of Parliament. If a friendly amendment were considered, it would be that we not reference just one particular session, but that going forward this be the policy for all sessions of Parliament. That would then limit us strictly to what we have left going forward.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I see there's some confusion as to whether or not this motion, which was passed—2014, of course is when it was passed—has been implemented.

Could we possibly agree that we adopt that type of motion, but have the Parliaments...?

The problem is this, of course, that the last time we met I think was three years ago. I really wouldn't want to prolong this to a period of time. That's the reason we thought we should make a new motion that would implement this. If we can work something out here, that makes sense....

The intent, of course, is that from this time forward we enact this motion that was passed in 2014.

● (1235)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): I do have a question for you, or maybe a proposition. Could we ask why it hasn't been implemented and receive the information as to the reasons? Then from there we'll have the answers to the question, and maybe we won't need the motion.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Gagan Sikand): Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I was just going to add that there might be a legitimate reason that it wasn't carried out, so just by passing a motion to call on the Library of Parliament to enact a previous motion might not end up accomplishing what you want. Ultimately, what you need is to get the information from the librarian on why this hasn't occurred, and then the next step would be to go from there.

I'm not suggesting that it wait three years for that to happen, but perhaps that's the best course of action. This committee has just tasked itself with something to do, so it would be great to see that information come back so you can understand why and then make a decision as to how to proceed.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Yes, sir.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Just to follow up on what Mr. Gerretsen was saying, why don't we just write them a letter? Then we can get the correspondence back and act appropriately, depending on what they say.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Then we can decide whether to call a meeting to address it at that time.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): It's a good idea. The other proposition that is being put forward by our helpers here is that in a couple of weeks we could reconvene to look at the estimates. The clerk will be here and we would be able to ask the question at that time.

All right. Is that...?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: That's acceptable.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Are you withdrawing the motion for now or are you leaving it?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I think that's a worthwhile proposal.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Okay, then we will reconvene in two weeks on this matter and be able to....

Yes, sir.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I'm just wondering if it would be prudent to write a letter so that the clerk comes prepared.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): We could let them know, yes. That's a good idea.

Mr. Colin Carrie: That would be great.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Are we in agreement here?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Quach, did you want to introduce something?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: It has been proposed that we receive the Parliamentary Budget Officer to address the budget of the library. Just before the meeting, I spoke with the analysts and wondered whether it might be appropriate to invite the parliamentary librarian to come and talk about the studies that should be done. The idea is that we can find out what the researchers at the library need. There has been talk, I think, of a study called Parliament 2020, which was started but has not been completed. This study could be continued if it still meets a need.

I therefore propose that the librarian appear before us and that the research needs be identified.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): It is therefore proposed that we invite the librarian to come and talk to us about the predicted needs and any other questions we may wish to ask.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Do we know the date of our next meeting?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): I think we have to check the availability.

It will be in the next two weeks.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Okay.

[*English*]

Are we in agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Lucie Moncion): Are there any other matters?

No? We are good. Thank you very much.

If there are no other matters, the meeting is adjourned.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

The meeting is adjourned.

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